

Strengthening Passenger Rail Security in Light of the September 11 Attacks

Statement by George D. Warrington
President and CEO, Amtrak

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to join you here today for this very important discussion.

I am also proud to introduce you to Chief Ernest Frazier, chief of the Amtrak Police Department. The APD has been, for more than a decade, a nationally accredited police force, led and staffed by people with many years of experience. It works very closely in coordination with all of the relevant local, state and federal law enforcement agencies across the country, including the FBI Terrorism Task Force.

Like all Americans, we at Amtrak are enormously saddened by the horror of the tragedies in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. But also like all Americans, we are taking greater precautions and doing everything we can to help our country cope. I am proud of all the hard work that has been done by Chief Frazier and the 24,000 men and women of Amtrak during the past three weeks. It hasn't been easy, but I believe we have risen to the occasion, and we remain committed as always to keeping America moving forward.

I want to emphasize that the safety and security of our guests and facilities is our number one priority. The national passenger rail system has a good record on this issue. And we are going to consult with our colleagues, study every angle, and take every appropriate measure to counter threats to our security and safety.

We face several unique challenges in this endeavor. The foremost challenge is the relatively open and intermodal nature of the passenger rail system. For example, on an average weekday, New York's Penn Station handles about 30,000 Amtrak passengers a day. But at least 300,000

additional passengers go through the station on the Long Island Railroad and New Jersey Transit. Thousands more use the station to transfer to New York City subways.

And Penn Station is not unique. For more than 20 years, transportation policy has encouraged an open, intermodal environment in virtually every train station in the country.

Further, I would point out that in Europe, Japan and other countries with a longer history of dealing with terrorism, you see much the same: open, intermodal passenger rail systems.

The other major challenge is that the majority of tracks we operate on are owned by the freight railroads. So we are working closely with the Association of American Railroads' task forces on physical infrastructure, operational security and information security – and we will continue to develop new policies and procedures with them as needed.

As I mentioned before, Amtrak has been operating on maximum alert since September 11. Within moments of the tragedy, we suspended all Amtrak service nationwide to allow for a top-to-bottom security sweep. All trains, tracks, bridges, tunnels, stations and other facilities – including those controlled by others – were inspected within hours, and security personnel remain stationed at all facilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Entrances and exits are being patrolled, and access is being restricted.

Last week, we implemented a new policy requiring Amtrak guests to present valid photo IDs and answer security questions when purchasing tickets or checking baggage.

We have created a computer program that automatically cross-checks ticket purchases and reservations – whether they are made at a ticket counter, a QuikTrak machine or online -- against the FBI watchlist on a real-time basis.

Very shortly, we will be suspending on-board ticket sales in the Northeast Corridor between Washington, New York and Boston -- which means that every guest that boards a Northeast Corridor train will have been reviewed for security purposes.

We believe these policies strike the right balance between providing greater security and maintaining the kind of open, intermodal design that underpins virtually every rail system in the world.

Going forward, we are committed to doing everything necessary and reasonable to improve our security further. We at Amtrak have created an internal task force with representatives from our police, operations, safety and engineering departments – all of whom are working very hard to develop and implement additional measures.

In response to Congressional requests, we have submitted a \$3.1 billion September 11 Response Package, which breaks out like this:

- First, about \$1 billion is devoted to bringing railroad tunnels in the New York, Washington and Baltimore regions up to modern standards for fire- and life-safety protection.
- Second, about \$531 million is devoted to deterrence, vulnerability reduction and emergency response efforts. This will include new lighting, fencing, security cameras and access-control systems; the hiring of additional police and security officers and K-9 units; improvement of our command-and-communications systems; additional training in anti-terrorism and security measures; and hazmat detection and response systems.
- Third, about \$949 million is needed for Northeast Corridor capacity and reliability measures, to handle the increased traffic we are experiencing and to improve passenger flow; and
- Finally, \$660 million is devoted to equipment repairs, upgrades and acquisitions to handle increased demand nationwide.

Mr. Chairman, these are steps that we are confident we can implement quickly to further enhance the security, safety and capacity of our passenger rail system. The benefits of this package would be very significant:

- We will reduce risks and meet higher public expectations about the security of our passenger rail system;
- We will speed the installation of critical ventilation, fire- and life-safety systems in our tunnels, bringing them up to modern standards; and
- We will build a more reliable, flexible fleet to accommodate changing consumer demand.

Before closing, I would like to spend just a moment explaining some of the immediate steps we took in response to the national emergency. As soon as we determined that our system was safe on September 11, we began putting every available piece of equipment back into service and accepting the airline tickets of stranded travelers. For several days, we were one of the only transportation options around the country.

As you may have seen in the media, our ridership has jumped by 10% to 15% on a national basis since the attacks. Ridership on the high-speed Acela Express is up by as much as 45%; and long-distance trains are up about 12%. As we go forward, we believe there are several factors that are likely to cause a sustained increase in demand.

In addition to helping thousands of ordinary travelers, we were honored to provide free transportation to the families and friends of many of the victims; and to firefighters, police officers, medical teams, airline crews and public officials. We've delivered relief supplies for the American Red Cross. We've even carried hundreds of extra carloads of U.S. Mail.

Mr. Chairman, in closing I want to reiterate that the passenger rail system has a good record on security issues, but we also have some unique challenges. And it is my commitment to you and to every American that we will work with our colleagues in the transit and freight railroads, and everyone involved in this enterprise, to do what is necessary to provide every guest on our trains a safe, comfortable traveling experience.

Thank you, and I will be happy to answer your questions.